Channel: Dr Joely Black

URL: https://youtu.be/vp89cFfe4OA

Title: Milo Winter Update-Planning, Cognitive Inflexibility, and Autism-Age of Scorpius

Upload: 20 Nov 2025

Transcript

0:00
Okay. Well, I think we can all agree that whenever I say I'm not going to do a thing, we can guarantee I'm going to
0:05
turn around and do it again. Um, there have been some updates in the
0:13
winter scandal, the Age of Scorpia scandal I'm going to call it, because we need to be careful about names. I found
0:20
out about this on threads this week, and there have been, it just feels like
0:25
there's been drama after drama on threads this week. I've been there for Sticker Gate 2, I think we're on Sticker
0:31
Gate 2, and a host of others in the book community. This has been something that
0:38
I have been following more closely this week. I said in the comments I wasn't going to come back to the Age of
0:45
Scorpius winter drama and ongoing situation. And I think I've learned that
0:53
I need to be careful about what I say I'm not going to do because here I am once again doing a video on it. A book
1:00
was back in the summer an indie author released their book The Age of Scorpius.
1:09
They were then under the name Order of Winter, which is a pen name and they had
1:16
gained a huge following over the last sort of like four or five years. Been
1:21
very excited trying to promote their book. They'd gone viral very early on and they had this book that they that
1:28

they wanted to get out there. They had huge numbers of sales, pre-orders and that you would be envious of and all
1:35
this this caused a lot of storm. a young person, 22 years old, very new to doing
1:41
this kind of thing, I think. And the book came out in July. It very quickly
1:46
received a great deal of negative reviews. The author's response to those negative reviews was not very good at
1:53
all, very rude. They had shown signs of this in previous videos prior to
1:59
publication where they had responded to people saying that they needed to gain
2:04
more experience by saying that they had done their 10,000 hours and their 10,000 hours turned out to be starting from
2:11
when they were 12, which I would say and I agree with anyone who has said that that does not count as part of your
2:16
10,000 hours. That's 10,000 professional hours. Let's see. I'm on my second academic career and I'm 10 years into it
2:22
and I still don't feel like I've done 10,000 hours. So, there's that uh side
2:28
of the issue. The responses continue to be very negative. I will go into a
2:33
little bit more of the detail there as we get into this. And what they had done
2:39
was set up pre-orders and was then allegedly just sending out bookmarks
2:44
rather than the actual book because it took longer to get the book out than Tik Tok shop allowed. So there was some
2:50
complexity around that issue that has been raised by other people. There have been lots of lots of reviews of the
2:56
book, lots of very detailed breakdowns of the book. I highly recommend going and looking at reads with Rachel for
3:02
example did a very uh comprehensive examination of the issue. Meredith Novacco especially her work reaching out
3:10
to the editors themselves because there was at one point a complicated argument
3:16

over whether or not Winter had actually got any editors in at all. It turned out
3:22
that the story of Age of Scorpius is that it was originally published,
3:27
self-published as a book when they were 14 and then moving forward, they didn't
3:33
seem to have done anything in terms of editing the actual story or doing
3:39
developmental edits, thinking about any kind of feedback that they'd ever received. I will come back to that as
3:46
well. And the point where I came in was if you go back and look at my original video, I
3:52
am coming at this as a now 47year-old who had a very large fantasy world and
4:00
still has very very large fantasy world that is called a paracosm that it goes beyond something that you construct
4:07
simply because you want to write a set of books or comics or whatever media you want to produce from it. This is
4:13
something that you use as a method to process the world. It is not the same as
4:18
maladaptive daydreaming. That is more of an activity and is obviously the use of
4:25
the term maladaptive sort of suggests where we're going here that it is not healthy. It can become extremely
4:31
intrusive and overwhelming. And the difference with a paracosm is
4:36
that it does have this kind of literary angle to it. The Bronte sisters, for example, probably the most famous and
4:42
obvious example, had a paracosm and they wrote about it and they very often share
4:47
information with other people outside of that world, you other people talking to them and discussing it. Uh I gave the
4:55
example of um one of the things about the paracosm that I have is that you
5:00
know universal free healthcare whenever I'm in A&E and it happens more than it should. I'm a runner so this sort of
5:08
accidents happen. Um I um I will sit there and I will be learning stuff about you know oh this is
5:14

how medicine works in this how would this work if this was happening in Amna and that kind of helps me to deal with
5:20
the world and to live with it to come to understand it better. I had that angle
5:25
and I also had the angle of being autistic potentially also ADHD.
5:31
I could kind of talk about how very large and very overwhelming that world can become, especially if you have
5:38
someone or a group of people as winter has or had who were as excited and
5:44
engaged with that world and really wanted to make it happen. but also the difficulties of how we present in the
5:52
world as autistic, especially if we're very verbal. And because of the nature
5:58
of human beings relying a lot on verbal communication as a fundamental quality
6:03
of our species and our social relationships, autistic people, we are very specifically disabled in various
6:12
ways around that. And I wanted to highlight how we can seem far less
6:19
disabled than we actually are. The reason why I've come back to this is
6:25
kind of complicated because I felt that the first video really said everything that I had to
6:31
say. And I honestly am still feeling a little bit weird about the second video. I used it as a jumping off point for
6:39
other aspects of looking at how drama spaces work. Uh, but I didn't really go
6:45
into how toxic they can become and how damaging they are to both creators and audience and and people associated with
6:53
that when things go wrong. But also, I was probably extending the limit. And
6:58
I'm not sure what it was. And the reason why I'm coming back now is um Winter has
7:06
come back after a hiatus. And I do have things to say about what
7:13
they have written. I'm going to try very specifically to stick to anything that
7:19
is around the fallout that they experience that they describe what

7:24
they've actually written. I'm kind of taking an an academic stance here. I
7:29
also had thoughts about the editorial side of it that I wanted to draw out a
7:36
little bit more and I think particularly the difficulty of being more disabled
7:42
than you appear and functioning in the world as a young adult. I hope that this
7:47
is going to be useful to outsiders who are autistic, ADHD, that kind of
7:54
combination. I am trying to stay away from seeing
8:00
this as, oh, this is the latest drama in the winter age of Scorpio situation
8:06
because I do just have concerns more generally about young people in the world as it is right now. Um, and what
8:15
you might do if this kind of thing happened to you at that age. But I'm
8:20
also thinking about it from my own perspective as being an autistic person
8:25
and wondering how on earth I would have dealt with this when it, you know, if it had happened to me. Self-publishing
8:31
really wasn't a thing when I was writing in this kind of intense atmosphere. The
8:36
social media didn't exist either. We really are talking 2003 to 2005. It's a
8:42
very very long time ago. I have some thoughts and some of those thoughts are
8:48
actually related to my own situation right now and I'm going to talk a little
8:53
bit more about cognitive inflexibility because it's something I've been thinking a lot about. I'm really using
8:59
this as a jumping off point to anyone who has looked at this situation with
9:05
age of scorpius and felt very frightened because they understand as an autistic person that they aren't reading the
9:11
world correctly. And this is something that is very specific to being autistic
9:17
is the constant struggle to accurately read what's going on around you in the
9:24

social world that is unspoken where the rules keep changing and it feels very
9:30
weird and you constantly need guidance and support and that just doesn't exist.
9:37
So uh I I guess I should start with that bit. Uh I apologize this is very very
9:42
low effort and not really scripted. I originally came into this because uh Age
9:49
of Scorpius's main character is a is a historian and and actually an epigrapher
9:54
and paparologist and that's something that I actually do. That's what my research is. It was very weird to to
10:00
have that misrepresented in the first few pages of a book. That's just basically how I got interested. But um
10:05
the autism side is particularly interesting to me because I have
10:10
followed a lot of people who produce autistic content or they produce content
10:16
that is around the research and the experience of being autistic and it is much more focused on the sensory
10:23
sensitivity side of being autistic and far less on the social communication
10:30
style and ability to compreh apprehend the world around you side of being
10:37
autistic. I think that's because that latter one is much more difficult to
10:44
really express and get people to understand because I'm autistic. I know
10:49
I also experience alexiththemia and differences in my interosception. So I
10:55
very often don't know what I'm feeling until months or years after. That means
11:00
that in the moment I often react in weird and unexpected ways to things.
11:07
It has been a very long journey coming to understand what they call I mean they
11:12
call it the six-second rule. Honestly 6 seconds is way too short. I need months
11:18
to process things and I think this is going to be my takeaway from this is the four months that had been given is just
11:25

way too short. Coming back after four months I I wouldn't have done that. My takeaway to anyone who goes through an
11:31
internet problem is go away for more than four months. Give yourself at least a year before you come back and try and
11:38
do anything. I'm going to have a look at what Winter has actually written. And
11:44
I've been being very careful with pronouns and um the language that I use
11:50
here because Winter has decided to uh come out as trans and I don't feel that
11:58
I am in any way qualified to comment on it except to say that if Winter ref
12:04
wishes to be referred to as Milo then that is something I'm quite happy to
12:10
respect. published a piece of writing or he published a piece of writing under the
12:16
title high disturbance. In that piece of writing, he doesn't
12:21
actually specify preferred pronouns. However, at the very bottom of that piece of writing, Sorley, who is one of
12:29
the art directors, I think one of the people involved in um Age of Scorpies
12:35
from the art side, has done a sort of like an art piece about it and refers to
12:41
Milo with he him pronouns. I'm going to try to respect that as being the choice
12:48
that Milo has chosen and that he respect he prefers to be um referred to as he
12:55
him. This was published on the website. There is a link to it on the Patreon and
13:02
it appeared this week. I found out about this through Inglorious Gigi on threads
13:08
who's been following the situation and has given some commentary from the trans
13:14
perspective. He is an author and you should go read his books. There's a a
13:19
long piece of writing that combines a what I would call a traditional academic
13:26
style with making links back to his
13:32
mental state at the time of the fallout from the publication of the book and everyone being extremely angry and about

13:39
receiving a really bad book and not receiving a book at all. And there is some insight I think that can be gained
13:46
around the issues with the editors as well as the ongoing narrative about the
13:54
one person Lewis who put out a video on TikTok and discussed it without naming Winter at all or the book and just
14:01
discussing it. And that's going to kind of hopefully lead onto some discussion of cognitive inflexibility. When I read
14:08
this, I had a combination of thoughts. I am reading this at the same time as I'm
14:16
marking grading a whole bunch of papers and I had felt like I was coming in and
14:22
going oh now I'm grading a particular type of paper it might be just cognitive inflexibility again I was really um I'm
14:32
troubled by this my viewpoint on writing after an incident like this is that you
14:41
need to leave very long space of time between writing about how it impacted
14:48
you, the center of the drama and your own mental health. That has to be left
14:54
out of the picture in the early certainly in the early stages. You know, if you are being interviewed by John
15:00
Ronson 10 years down the line about your experiences of being part of something
15:07
like this, I would say that's the point when you might be able to discuss the impact on your own mental health. I
15:14
think at this stage it's still too early. I was really stunned when I read this to see this coming back four months
15:23
later. What is it? So, August, sorry, I'm now going to count. I'm gonna count months off my fingers. August, we say
15:30
July, August, September, October, November. So, five months, midway through November. Bear in mind, as you
15:37
get older, your perception of time shifts. And my perception of time is now that I seem to be having breakfast every
15:43

10 minutes and everything else is a blur. Might be because I'm teaching as
15:49
well. and all I can think about is what I'm teaching and how many papers I have left to mark over the next few months
15:56
and weeks. But I don't think it has been enough time to make everything about
16:03
your own mental health. Now, there's a whole conversation to be had around apologies, and I discussed this in my
16:10
very first video and I believe my second video as well, and I highlighted Mika's rhetoric, who has analyzed apologies and
16:17
analyzes drama more generally from a rhetorical standpoint and the issues around when and how you should apologize
16:24
effectively. And honestly the perspective of being the person who had who is at the center
16:30
of it who has caused the thing to happen effectively is you should keep that
16:36
back. That's that's no business of anybody. The purpose is to express an understanding and a promise to do better
16:43
that you may have caused harm. You know you know people haven't got books but
16:48
relatively given that we're just watching things fall out. We've just watched the the whole Foodie Beauty
16:55
crash out plus uh whatever is going on with Coffeezilla. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
17:00
Coffeezilla. I It's uh Steven Federson is the correct the correct name. I'm so
17:06
sorry. Um but uh you know the issues around there huge legal legal debates going on um that are far higher stakes
17:13
than this. But still the reaction, the treatment of other people, the way that
17:20
Winter behaved was unpleasant. He was unpleasant to an awful lot of people and
17:26
the plan was unrealistic. The the fact that the editors were thrown under the
17:31
bus, which we're going to come back to. Huge, you know, those those are issues in within a community that become very
17:37

serious. And for that community, you know, I, you know, I respect people who would have felt hurt by Winter's
17:44
responses to the things that they said, especially because so many people reviewed the book leading with kindness
17:52
and leading with a kindness that they perhaps would not have offered to anyone
17:57
else. So, I'm aware of that. And you know I I don't want to say by saying it
18:03
it is not as high stakes as other things that have been going on recently is not
18:08
to dismiss people's feelings about it. So, Winter has come back and all of this
18:14
piece is very much focused on using the wildfires that he has experienced from
18:22
living in Colorado and other aspects of the destruction of the natural
18:27
environment as a way to talk about his own psychological pain and struggle as a result of this. I found from a writing
18:35
perspective a little bit overblown, but does reveal that actually he can write, you know, he isn't incapable of writing.
18:43
I have been in a writing group and I will never forget the the one comment from somebody who said I write sentences
18:48
like bullets. So I don't know how that I'm supposed to respond to that but it now lives rentree in my head. There is a
18:55
sense of the academic side. You can see that on this page we have references.
19:02
Everything is cited and there are whole sections that are entirely about the
19:09
issue of conservation, preservation, indigenous cultures, the issues that are
19:15
facing the national parks in the states. And I thought that was actually good. If
19:21
I was marking this as a person who has to grade a lot of papers, yeah, I I
19:27
would be impressed with the level of citation. I would be impressed with the argument more generally in this
19:34
particular paragraph which starts off though a warming climate contributes to
19:39

fires with increased drought and etc etc. Yeah, good good writing objectively and
19:46
on from there. I I was I felt like I thought at this
19:53
point that if winter went off to Substack and or Medium, I don't know if
19:58
we're still using Medium, but Substack has horrendous issues, but you know, if you created a newsletter, Substack, and
20:04
you just wrote about this, if all you wrote about was the issues of ecology
20:12
specific to the national parks, there is a huge audience for that. I can imagine
20:17
that if you removed yourself and your own emotional attachment to it, at least
20:22
at first, and you you focused on producing really well-rounded essays that dealt with maybe one particular
20:29
issue per week, and you did research on it, you could build up a substantial
20:35
following both, you know, from the academic and non-academic world, and
20:40
they would be really interested in what Winter has to say. and you could build a
20:46
career out of doing that kind of thing. And very effective writing, I had no
20:53
issues that what I do have issues with is the very very serious references to a
21:00
mental breakdown which I think needs to be kept off the internet regardless of whether it is in response to a drama
21:07
which one is at the heart of or not. Um, it's very frightening for people to read
21:15
that you are having some kind of a severe breakdown where you may need
21:21
support and not have access to it. the videos that Winter made around and after
21:29
the initial responses veered between anger at people and also attempting to
21:37
latch on to this has caused me an emotional crisis. Your readers are not responsible for that and the general
21:44
public are not responsible for that. That is something that needs to be taken
21:49

off the internet and dealt with by health care professionals because it's frightening to see. It took me a really
21:56
long time to learn this is being in online spaces. My first real engagement
22:03
with the online world was via a bulletin board for A and ED support because I did
22:09
have a very severe ED when I was in my teens and 20ies and the rules were so
22:16
strict around discussion of weights and eating and food. We were there for
22:24
recovery and if you were in crisis, you were not allowed to post and you were
22:30
very strictly taken off by the moderators if you did post anything like
22:35
that. And that I feel is a pretty good rule of thumb is that if you are in
22:40
crisis, you you get off and you go elsewhere. This this should not be the
22:46
center of the conversation after what happened. and then actually describes the decision to go to um Helsinki,
22:54
Finland, which I felt I have. Yes. Um
22:59
when I first really got back into Amn I've been writing all my life as a child
23:05
and then I was like 24 years old and someone really got into what I was describing and into got me writing
23:12
again. Yeah. I I did a very similar thing. I was on one track. I was on
23:17
rails and then I jumped track very suddenly to a what turned out to be a
23:22
new set of rails. This seems to be a pattern if you are autistic potentially
23:28
with that combination of autistic ADHD is that for months or years everything has to be exactly the same and then
23:34
suddenly it can't be like that at all anymore and everything has to radically change and I was in a personally very
23:42
very difficult situation and radically upended and changed my entire life and
23:48
decided to leave academia and move to a completely different city did not move continent but did move city. So around

23:56
about the same age, making the same kind of choices that if you are aistic, if
24:01
you are not that particular autistic ADHD, look really just why from the
24:07
outside. That is the only way I can really explain it. And and if you have anyone in your life who does this kind
24:14
of thing or you are that kind of person, you you you just have to know that it can be as mild as I ate banana and
24:22
yogurt every day for lunch for 6 months and now I can't even look at a banana uh
24:28
or yogurt and I I need to find something different to this kind of extreme
24:33
decision. I do want to highlight that this is the the issue with drama uh and
24:40
this kind of associated thing on the internet is that as much as you know you should not if you watch this video you
24:47
should not be going into spaces you should not be going into sie spaces you should not be talking to anyone who is
24:52
directly involved with the project you should not be digging up information on the dog even though the dog is named in
24:57
this and I wish he hadn't done that I wish he had kept that private mention the Kickstarter but don't go any further
25:03
Uh I this should not be on here at all. Um it would be interesting reflection in
25:10
say 5 to 10 years time for those of us who are interested in digital society. It might be something I bring up in my
25:16
teaching. I'm teaching on a course on digital society next semester. But I was
25:21
really um you know I was concerned after the last
25:27
video that I made that I didn't really discuss the difficulties for creators
25:34
and other people who get caught up in this sort of event when it spirals so
25:41
quickly and horribly. And there are people who take it too far. And there are people who have lingering axes to
25:48

grind and who are quite happy to go into those spaces and make life absolute
25:55
hell. And that is wrong and unfair. It chases people off the internet for ever
26:02
as John Ronson's book shamed highlighted. And that was something that I felt that I hadn't discussed in enough
26:09
depth to just talk about the damage that that can do. I'm uncomfortable with him putting this out on the internet for
26:16
everyone to see. Not just because it lasts forever, but just because it means that everybody gets to react to your
26:22
mental health issue. I think that is something that you really need to step
26:28
back and think very very carefully about. Again, I'm struck by the lack of
26:33
somebody who could kind of step into the situation and say, "Maybe you need to
26:39
not talk about this online. you need to go away, you need to go and do something else.
26:44
a similar issue with an autistic I believe it's an autistic writer this week on threads who is much larger very
26:51
very big creator who has done something not on the same scale as this but there
26:57
is an issue going on and very much arguing that they they are big enough that they will have a PR team and why
27:03
isn't somebody stepping in and making sure that they're protected that the audience is you know that the whole
27:10
situation is is carefully managed so Um, I don't know why Winter is attaching his
27:18
own situation to the broader situation of the climate. I don't see a good
27:24
enough argument for why. Um,
27:29
I mean, he says, "The world is burning and I will burn with it." Uh, we're not taking enough action for the climate. It
27:34
must be done now. Yeah, that's that's absolutely true. I completely agree. I'm an environmentalist. I I studied
27:40

geography. who he did an awful lot of environmental science at school and I completely agree with that point but
27:45
this has nothing to do with with his particular situation that was about a book he'd written and this frustrates
27:53
me. I don't like people attaching their own personal stuff to much larger
28:00
environmental issues just it doesn't seem relevant. So um he then uh explains his name is
28:08
now Milo. Um I believe there is a a note to that um that is down the bottom and
28:16
this is where so this just to highlight this is sorely um who uses um he him
28:23
pronouns that's as still there's a lot of stuff going on here and then we have
28:28
three um so that just the note feels weird as well
28:34
uh so the note feels weird as well uh you should open the source links the environment is way more important than
28:40
my gender identity. I just wanted to give you another talking point so I can bring attention to what matters to all of us. That is such a strange
28:50
thing to do. I again I go back to set up a newsletter, make it all about ecology.
28:58
Clearly he knows his stuff. Clearly he's done you know he's I believe he's done um a degree in ecology or is working
29:04
towards a degree in ecology and make that the absolute focus of it. the the odd jumps between the personal and the
29:12
academic are very peculiar. I would have stayed away from that. Uh it just feels
29:18
very odd, a very odd choice that could so easily be interpreted in the worst
29:25
possible way. And I am I know that this is going to make a lot of people angry. I am coming at this from a standpoint
29:34
that is going to seem far more empathetic than anyone else would offer.
29:40
I still I still don't think any of this is relevant. It's like two different it
29:45
it is really like two different subjects being smashed together in a way that
29:52

doesn't help either subject at all. I still feel like this should have been
29:59
left from a personal angle for years. Even if at 22, 5 months feels like a
30:06
long time, it really is not. Write a Substack, an anonymous substack if you must, about ecology, about the
30:13
landscape, about work, about everyday experiences, you know, a journal, a
30:19
diary. Make it writing because the writing will bring in the audience that's relevant. A huge critique of
30:27
Winter's Tik Tok presence was that it was all about the art and it was all
30:33
about Winter's own story as a person rather than sharing any of the actual
30:38
writing and that this is partly what caused the issue.
30:44
Now, as part of this piece, he goes back over the issue with the editors. So, we
30:49
come back to the issue of the editors. And here I have another problem. What he's trying to do is to explain that he
30:57
did have a developmental editor and he did have another editor on board and since then there have been issues around
31:04
Reedsy commenting. Since then there has been a tension with
31:09
Reedzy. I believe Reedzy has uh agreed to reimburse some of the expenditure on
31:15
those those edits because they weren't considered to be good enough. I still
31:21
feel like that is putting the burden of putting out a good book entirely on the
31:26
developmental editor and the copy editor and the timeline is appallingly bad. So
31:35
personal perspective again I'm in the middle of writing uh reddrafting the
31:41
bone moth which I have spent a couple of years doing this now. So, I had put out this thing that I put on WADA that was a
31:48
first person POV and is a like an eight-part sort of first step towards
31:53
writing something and I just really wanted to get back into writing where Age of Scorpius must have been early

32:00
January probably, you know, obviously got a full manuscript, but in terms of
32:06
actual plot and development and work
32:11
needed to get to a publishable standard, probably not that much further on from where I am with the bone moth as it is
32:19
now. I don't have my I should have my magnetic board behind me to demonstrate all the work that I'm doing on it. But
32:26
at the same time as Winter was asking for pre-orders or advertising for
32:32
pre-orders, he was getting these edits back, a developmental edit, a copy edit.
32:38
these edits were coming in and his justification for the book not being up
32:45
to standard was that the edits for some reason he seems to think give him uh a
32:50
pass to to be publishable and when clearly the book wasn't and then on the
32:56
other hand he was already well past that he was treating this as though this was a finished manuscript that was ready for
33:03
publication even before the developmental editor had apparently said This is fine. This is ready. I am
33:10
troubled because the other justification for the book being bad is that Winter
33:16
was so busy with his pre-orders and ensuring that the pre-orders went well and getting all of that done that he
33:24
didn't have time to do the final edits. And as slow as the traditional
33:29
publishing world is, I do know from that that they'd have all of that done by the
33:35
time you came to do pre-orders. This feels like it was rushed because
33:42
Winter has always had this dream of being a published author. I think that
33:47
is why he published at 14. And I feel like
33:59
it's difficult to know how to put this actually. Um, it's like when everyone around you when you're young and you're,
34:05

you know, you're young and you're disabled and you clearly have major major issues and which everyone could see, even if I didn't have the diagnosis
34:12
at the time, everyone could see that I had huge issues. If I had stepped up and said, "Oh, I want to self-publish this
34:17
book that I've handwritten on pieces of paper in my 500 page. I had one of these things. I hand wrote the first protomar
34:25
type thing." If I had said, "I want to self-publish that." I could imagine somebody just going, "Oh, yeah." You
34:30
know, Won't hurt to do that. Just the feeling of somebody desperately wanting
34:37
a dream to come true and to be real, but failing to understand the need to slow
34:43
down and take the correct steps to make sure that the dream became the thing
34:50
that you wanted it to be. I I think for the people who were deeply empathetic to
34:56
Winter at the time, the people who were frustrated and angry about the book but were still pulling their punches, I
35:02
think many of those people seem to have been autistic ADHD people who were of
35:08
the same sort of age or had been autistic ADHD, same sort of age with a paracosm who had that dream and you want
35:17
to see it come true and you feel deeply sad because you can see yourself in them and that is, you know, where I came at
35:23
my came at this when I did my first video. So, I I can relate to wanting
35:30
that and I can uh sort of relate to wanting to rush to the end. Um, I do
35:37
actually really enjoy the writing itself, just disappearing into the writing even when I'm really really tired. You know, even if it's only three
35:44
sentences and they're really rubbish sentences, I really enjoy doing that that kind of thing. Um, so I don't know
35:49
if that's slightly different. Um, it's a
35:54
so I don't feel that you can put this on edits not doing their job to as much a
36:02

degree as Winter does in this piece. Now, clearly if Reedzy has chosen to
36:10
reimburse funds as a result of some investigation, that's another matter.
36:15
But I feel like there's this bizarre disconnect in what Winter has written
36:22
here between saying I had editors and I
36:27
effectively responded to the editor's comments and gave myself time to respond
36:33
to those comments because that's the key to creating a an effective book. It does
36:38
feel as though there's that disconnection there. Now, this goes back to Winter's discussion of his story,
36:47
which has been pretty consistent since his first video addressing the
36:54
controversy, which was that he had found a Tik Tok video that is talking about an
37:02
unnamed author and an unnamed book that clearly wasn't edited and is indie. and
37:07
he realized that this video was about him and about age of scorpions and that
37:14
this was the source of the drama that this person was so huge that he was able
37:20
to take uh a book that was otherwise going to do really well and absolutely
37:26
destroyed it. Uh, all I can see from this is is that the edits weren't
37:31
properly being addressed and worked on in a time frame that meant they could be
37:39
fully implemented before the book was actually published. And that lies with Winter. That absolutely solidly lies
37:46
with Winter. I see. He says, um, "My developmental edits were returned to me
37:52
in March before the pre-order chaos. My copy edits were returned to me in April in the heat of the pre-order chaos.
38:00
You see, that's still too late. You should not be doing editing on a book
38:05
with so many pre-orders and a launch date for July. That doesn't seem
38:12
sensible at all. I would be losing my mind, especially if you were midway
38:17

through studying and working at the same time. He goes on to say, "During this time, I was constantly in shock,
38:23
exhausted, and overwhelmed from a rapid business startup. And in the haze of implementing my copy editor's
38:29
suggestions, I failed to notice that the edits themselves were insubstantial."
38:34
In September 2025, Reed, the platform I heard both my developmental editor and copy editor through, initiated an
38:41
investigation on the edit passes I'd received and requested third party feedback from editors uninvolved in the
38:47
project. I ended up receiving a full refund for my copyedit pass. Both Reedsy and the third party editors agreed that
38:54
the copy edits I received for the first edition of the Age of Scorpius were not up to par. The copy editor reached out
39:00
to me during Reed's evaluation, kindly apologizing, expressing her sympathy about the entire situation. I still feel
39:08
as though much of this issue could have been avoided by ensuring that this was
39:15
handled before a publication date was set that no assumption was made that the
39:20
book was in any way ready until it had been fully processed that they feedback
39:26
had been dealt with that it had seen beta readers that it had seen ARC's that
39:32
all of this had that it had gone through a substantial not just having a single
39:37
editor, copy editor, developmental editor look at it, but have other neutral people come and read it and say
39:44
here's an issue, there's an issue and that's how you get to a good book is
39:49
it you know it's never just one or two people. this then he then goes back to
39:55
uh present some evidence around the uh difficulties faced by people who took
40:01
things too far on the other side and the particular word scammer I have seen um
40:07

individuals sort of describe winter as a serial scammer oh he published it the first time a serial scammer never never
40:13
attempted to republish it I I don't think we should attach the word scammer to a child
40:19
I don't um winter was 14 when the first book was published. I tend towards the
40:26
idea that you should not attribute to malice anything that can adequately be explained by stupidity. And quite
40:32
frankly, a lot of this is adequately explained by stupidity. Um, that's rude
40:37
enough by itself, isn't it? But yeah, there's a series of terrible choices. This is a series of terrible choices.
40:44
Given all I've seen of the scammers and scammer space, I think this is somebody
40:49
who desperately desperately wanted a dream to come true and hadn't thought through all of the ramifications and
40:55
tends towards making impulsive choices and when those impulsive choices are
41:01
happening in front of hundreds of thousands of millions of people and that you get people commenting on all of that
41:07
because we all can. It's the internet. It's public. That is what creates chaos
41:13
and problems and we end up with this kind of situation. Very interesting from the perspective of studying digital
41:19
society. Again I coming back to discussions of the very specific issues
41:25
the mental health coming back to the very specific mental health issues
41:31
described here. These are inappropriate for a public space. These are inappropriate for somebody who is only
41:39
just on the outside of this because this is this is still going to just inflame
41:45
everything. Now I I find it I find it fascinating because having read a little
41:52
bit of the age of scorpius, it's intriguing to me because clearly Winter can write when he tries and and this is
41:58

may well have gone through several revisions and thought. Um I have issues with again with this
42:06
with the mental health side of the information. The other side of the
42:12
background to the ecology I think recognition that the void that the the
42:17
book was really bad is good potentially this could have been phrased better.
42:23
Basically I'm going to put it this way. So I I think if I was advising on this or if I was talking to this person and
42:30
this if this was one of my students, I would say you want to front line with remove any mental health content about
42:36
your own experience of what you were going through. Stick entirely to brutal facts like I made a clear mistake in
42:45
setting a publication date that was far too soon. I should have revised the book
42:50
and thought carefully about whether it was ready for publication prior to releasing it for pre-orders.
42:58
I should have thoroughly investigated my legal position as regards
43:04
sending people bookmarks instead of books in what happens if I can't release
43:11
a book on time and what the ramifications are for that. I would have
43:16
been cautious about setting up an LLC. Now I they are fairly common. So I'm I'm a freelancer myself and I have a
43:23
separate freelance HMLC thing that that I have that all of my income income if I
43:29
get a payout from YouTube then that goes into my tax return every year or it will
43:34
do next year. And uh that you know that's a a thing I don't know what the
43:40
law is in the states about whether you set up a business. I think going hard for an awful lot of imagery. Although,
43:46
so one thing about the art is that from the very first videos that Winter
43:53
produced, the same kind the same art appears. So I think although it seems like he has spent a hell of a lot on art

43:59
and clearly has I mean the website is astounding. I wish I had a website like that. Um contact me when I have money. I
44:07
could do with a website like that. I noticed that a lot of the art is repeated across all of the years of the
44:14
videos. So the expenditure on art, it does seem realistic that if he is on a
44:21
scholarship that allows you to just you if you're on a scholarship that allows
44:28
you to just have an income and you are free to spend that in any way you want to and it's just treated as a stipend
44:35
and you don't have to spend it on academic things, then perfectly fine for him to to spend it on authors to
44:42
perfectly fine for him to spend it on artists. I mean obviously it has been raised that he was getting artists from a board on Reddit called Starving
44:49
Artists I think which I allegedly issues around looking for artists who are
44:57
taking commissions at very low pay. Uh artists are living very fragile
45:02
existences as it is especially with the rise of AI. Now here we come into making terrible choices. Um
45:09
I am three cautionary tales in a trench coat at this point. So, I know what it
45:15
is like to deliberately overstimulate because I'm anxious and stressed and it
45:22
is a way of not looking at what I should be really looking at. For example, the last three or four months, uh, you know,
45:30
my YouTube video blew up, which was, you know, fantastic, also terrifying. And then I saw that as a way to share
45:36
material publicly because I'm very interested in public engagement as an academic and I hadn't had the confidence
45:43
to do it before and the video was a test and I expected it to get 50 views and it got 30 something thousand. That was
45:50
absolutely wonderful and the comments were astounding. You were all absolutely amazing. I was also at the time interviewing for

45:57
a lot of teaching posts and I got them both and am now dealing with far more
46:04
grading than I was expecting to have and have not planned well and that is pretty
46:10
much typical and part of my disability and part of my disability is not
46:16
recognizing that I'm going to do that. I hate this for all of us who live with
46:21
these kind of conditions because when you are given um to kind of go back a
46:27
little bit actually I also got technically support for my disability
46:34
from work a government scheme here in the UK called access to work and I got some things and they're very good at
46:41
giving you supports for when you are they're very good at giving you supports for things like sensory over
46:48
stimulation. So, I have now got some headphones that are really good and I
46:54
like them. I also have a couple of other bits and pieces that have been useful. I have an
47:00
app that I'm learning to use that will also give me support, although it's taken me a while to use it and that's
47:06
great. what we don't get so much help with and what really isn't supported to
47:12
the same degree because the support exists potentially but it is very difficult to access because it is
47:18
expensive is support dealing with this kind of thing. So my only level of support that I got for planning over
47:26
stimulation of the kind of a you've signed up for too much and now you need to back off and that kind of inability
47:33
to really plan to really see into the future and go well how am I going to feel in week eight of term when I've got
47:41
73 papers to mark and I need to get them all done and that's not even counting the other bunch of things that have come
47:46
in that need to be marked and graded and sent back within a particular amount of time. plus I have to keep teaching, plus

47:52
I'm burned out from other things, menopausal, etc., etc., because I'm not very good at that. Um, I really need
47:59
another human being to go, do you think that's a sensible idea? My partner is that person, and that is very often the
48:05
person who does this for other people is will be an adult who has is clued in to how you behave, what your particular
48:12
issues are, and what decisions you are making in any particular moment. And unfortunately, my partner is also
48:19
working an extremely stressful job and he is often up at midnight working that
48:25
job. So that creates an additional pressure. This is not uncommon for disabled people of every stripe. Being
48:33
able to access things like personal assistance is incredibly difficult. This is the kind of support that steps in
48:42
when you are autistic and you have to go to a social situation, but you don't
48:47
understand the ramifications of statements of things and that you need help to understand them. This is not the
48:54
same as saying that we give a free pass to people who say horrendous things on the internet and then turn around and
48:59
go, I was autistic. Or even worse, their parents or whatever come in and say, oh my god, you have to give him a free
49:05
pass. He's very upset he said something he didn't mean to say that. I am perfectly capable of learning what is
49:11
the right thing to say. It is infantilizing to say that there is no possibility for us to learn how to
49:18
engage in a way that is safe that is not demeaning to us and to have that be
49:25
effective and supportive. I guess the last bit that I want to talk about is around that issue of planning because
49:33
it's not just an issue of not really being able to plan or predict your
49:39
future accurately. Hello. I don't know what I was going to say. I

49:45
was going to say something. I was going to talk about planning. That was what I was going to talk about. I was going to talk about cognitive.
49:51
So since my cat has come to join us uh and she also has thoughts and opinions
49:57
although those are mostly regarding treats. Hello. Yeah. So I guess the
50:02
final thing referring to planning is about the issue of cognitive inflexibility
50:07
which is a very fundamental part of being autistic. It affects everything in
50:15
ways that I am really only now coming to appreciate. So, my inability to eat more
50:22
than six foods is about not really being able to have
50:29
many foods that I consider okay to eat for long periods. Um, being unable to
50:36
make choices. Choices have a very high cognitive load for me. That is another
50:42
issue. Another way that it presents very specifically in highintensity emotional
50:47
situations like this is the inability to know when to stop and the tendency to
50:54
just go on and on and on. Now, I wish I was talking about me 20 years ago when I
51:02
discuss this aspect and how it relates to my own particular experience of being
51:08
autistic. But the way it has shown up very very
51:13
recently is my inability to stop and my tendency to add more things when I need
51:19
to slow down. So this has happened to me in the last
51:25
few months as I was explaining about adding more teaching in order to bolster my income and to ensure that uh I can
51:32
have a decent summer where I I can do more research type work when I have less income. So, I was trying to kind of
51:39
figure all of that out and then YouTube kind of happened and it would be really
51:44
nice to get to a point where AdSense can add that a little bit. And
51:49

unfortunately, that meant that I was kind of negotiating with lots of different things happening at once,
51:56
bunch of new things. Uh, we're now operating on a new learning platform at my university. So, I had suddenly have
52:03
to learn a whole new platform for everything that I do. A whole new course which has a higher weekly cognitive
52:10
load. That's unusual. I have to admit that I'm starting to realize that I struggle more with textual communication
52:17
than I previously thought. For some reason, when it's zero effort posting on threads, fine, not a problem.
52:24
We'll talk to people without that being an issue. or at least I'm not as aware of the
52:33
problem of sitting for ages and ages and ages and thinking of the precise wording that I need to use. I mean, it might be
52:40
just so many years of experience with struggling with finding the right words that's been the problem. But
52:48
that aspect of it and the constant discovery of new aspects of the adult
52:55
world that I am too disabled to really cope with that I didn't realize I was
53:02
too disabled to cope with. I went into getting a diagnosis
53:07
having done what I thought was an awful lot of research and having also had people
53:17
repeatedly tell me over the years as understanding around autism and adult
53:22
autism became better understood and the diagnostic criteria shifted that I was
53:29
autistic. And unfortunately, I knew about 5 to 10% of ways that I am
53:37
disabled by being autistic. I know about 20 to 30% now. It still shows up in ways
53:45
that are unexpected. I had grown up blocking it out.
53:50
Some people use the term masking. I think of it as blocking out how I actually feel about things and what's
53:57
going on around me and trying my hardest just to get through the day. That I think is

54:05
uh a bigger issue than
54:12
just something like this. So I am always learning more about the ways that I
54:18
struggle in the world especially when I am not at my best. So
54:24
yeah, this has been a learning experience. Now where does this leave us
54:29
with Milo Winter and what can we learn from this? I certainly think I think the
54:37
first thing to do if this kind of thing happens to you is that you step back. I I think the biggest most obvious
54:44
takeaway for indie authors is to have the editing system, the developmental
54:50
edits and all of that done and in place and loads of people having reassured you that your book is ready to go. lots of,
54:58
you know, all of the the trusted beta readers and and arc readers and editors have have gone through it and that they
55:05
are the people who, you know, the people that you trust, the people who are engaged with the work, but not at a fan
55:12
level, who are able to tell you when things aren't good and need to be
55:18
improved, and that you don't even start pre-orders until you've got that sorted out. I know that this sometimes happens
55:25
in in the traditional publishing world that that kind of thing will happen, but they have all of those people set in
55:30
place with salaries. You need to do that all by yourself if you're an indie author. I think that's the most obvious
55:36
thing. The next thing is that if this kind of thing goes wrong, you you need
55:41
to break away from the blaming one person. I I do wonder if the narrative fixation on the one Tik Tok video having
55:49
caused the spiral is is to do with inflexibility and seeking to find an
55:55
effective narrative that explains the situation. I don't know. I'm I'm not a psychologist obviously. I think this is

56:02
far too early to come back to this in this particular way. I definitely keep
56:09
these intimate details of a complete mental breakdown off the internet. It's
56:15
not appropriate. It needs to be dealt with by a professional and it's the kind of thing that you could mention in 5 to
56:23
10 years, but not now. I don't think I think it's too soon. And you know, don't
56:29
use something like transitioning to to try and claim that you're making a a a
56:36
point about ecological restoration. My only comment on Milo's decision to
56:42
transition is declaring it along with all of this. I noticed that in the artist statement, um, Winter is still
56:50
expecting to have a book out by spring 2026. I still feel like that's too soon.
56:56
I think you know give yourself at least a year from now to work on it to really
57:01
get something that is good and worth reading worth what everyone is waiting
57:07
for. I think in terms of learning from the situation is being able to step back and
57:13
get off the internet just as Angelina gov and I were thinking oh finally he
57:19
has left the internet and will give us you know present a bit of space and I'm
57:24
potentially digging back into it but I was particularly interested in the idea of the planning and the discussion
57:30
around when you should start the process of pre-orders and the nitty-gritty of
57:37
some of the complicated things and fitted into my own inability as an autistic person to properly plan and
57:44
think through anything. Uh as a lesson to myself right now, having to do an
57:50
awful lot of planning for the next 3 to four weeks to make sure I get through this phase of uh the late the later part
57:57
of the year. And that is all I have to say about that. If you got this far,
58:02

thank you very much for watching. I apologize that this is um such loweffort content. Uh, I hope that it has been
58:09
useful to all of those who have followed this because they saw a lot of
58:14
themselves in winter and were terrified about
58:20
this same thing happening to them. It seems to me that most people in the indie publishing
58:27
space are very careful and do an awful lot of work to make sure that their
58:32
books are the best they can possibly be when they publish them and don't make those kind of mistakes. On the personal
58:40
side, it is extremely difficult when you are autistic to relate to the rest of
58:46
the world to understand what's going on and to understand yourself because
58:51
obviously alexmia and interception being different propriception often as well. All of these things play into a
58:57
difficulty reading the world around you and the world that's inside you to any
59:03
effective degree. This isn't to justify anything that
59:08
winter has done. I want to absolutely highlight that I am not on Winter's side. I'm also not particularly against
59:17
Winter. I'm only seeking to understand what has gone on. moments. My primary interest in
59:25
drama content has always been this strange tension between the identities
59:32
that we hold of ourselves and the way that that is reflected back to us or often not reflected back to us. So, I
59:38
only hope that everyone who is struggling at the moment with the last um few months of the year are doing okay
59:47
or as okay as they can be. And thank you very much for watching. If you got this
59:52
far, thank you very much indeed for watching. And thank you very much to all the support from my patreons. That is
1:00:02
thank you very much to my patrons uh Gild the Gilded Dragon, Cameron Desar, Karen Kunda, Hey Shannon, Jane K, Jane

1:00:10
Steel, Marley Marker, Joe and Rosie. Thank you very much to my cat for coming
1:00:16
to join us. Come on. There we are. You have to say goodbye to
1:00:21
the audience. Going to say goodbye. [Music]
1:00:27
No, you don't want to say goodbye. Want to say, can I have some tuna, mommy? So, thank you very much for
1:00:34
watching and I will see you all next week for the next video.

Compiled by Anatole Ternaux - http://deadfrenchmen.rip

Keywords: Audra winter, Audra winter books, booktok, booktube, bookstagram, 2020s, par asocial relationships, media studies, milo Prather, Sara Prather, Fort Collins, Colorado, Leavenworth, kansas, the age of scorpius, age of scorpius, the zodiac turner, the world of gardian, gardian, world of gardian llc, Sauli heikara, nokkipo, 9798998952425, alterlife book, alterlife, Elrose balan, B0F8PPHB5X, 9798998952456, B0FG32YN7R, Sauli Rauhala, 9798998952463, B0GBPXSDTQ, Serena winter, alphanix, alpha winter, the-d12rose, d12rose, milowinterwrites, Kaitlyn Moon, kaitlynmoon, Conviction Woods, Rieka Spring, Avia Phelan